

The background of the entire cover is a detailed mosaic of a religious figure, likely the Virgin Mary, with a serene expression. She has long, flowing hair and is wearing a red robe with a blue mantle. The mosaic is composed of many small, colorful tiles in shades of gold, red, blue, green, and brown. The figure is set against a golden background with some faint, stylized patterns.

SPOTLIGHT

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Study of Religion

• Howard Clark •

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Science Press

Acknowledgement of Land

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land where I research and write this book. I pay my respect to the Wallumattagul People and to the Elders both past, present and emerging. I remember that under the concrete and asphalt, houses and buildings, this land is, was and always will be sacred to Indigenous people.

Howard Clark

Acknowledgement

The author particularly acknowledges Islay Clark for her support and patience.

© Science Press 2019
First published 2019

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Words to Watch

account, account for State reasons for, report on, give an account of, narrate a series of events or transactions.

analyse Interpret data to reach conclusions.

annotate Add brief notes to a diagram or graph.

apply Put to use in a particular situation.

assess Make a judgement about the value of something.

calculate Find a numerical answer.

clarify Make clear or plain.

classify Arrange into classes, groups or categories.

comment Give a judgement based on a given statement or result of a calculation.

compare Estimate, measure or note how things are similar or different.

construct Represent or develop in graphical form.

contrast Show how things are different or opposite.

create Originate or bring into existence.

deduce Reach a conclusion from given information.

define Give the precise meaning of a word, phrase or physical quantity.

demonstrate Show by example.

derive Manipulate a mathematical relationship(s) to give a new equation or relationship.

describe Give a detailed account.

design Produce a plan, simulation or model.

determine Find the only possible answer.

discuss Talk or write about a topic, taking into account different issues or ideas.

distinguish Give differences between two or more different items.

draw Represent by means of pencil lines.

estimate Find an approximate value for an unknown quantity.

evaluate Assess the implications and limitations.

examine Inquire into.

explain Make something clear or easy to understand.

extract Choose relevant and/or appropriate details.

extrapolate Infer from what is known.

hypothesise Suggest an explanation for a group of facts or phenomena.

identify Recognise and name.

interpret Draw meaning from.

investigate Plan, inquire into and draw conclusions about.

justify Support an argument or conclusion.

label Add labels to a diagram.

list Give a sequence of names or other brief answers.

measure Find a value for a quantity.

outline Give a brief account or summary.

plan Use strategies to develop a series of steps or processes.

predict Give an expected result.

propose Put forward a plan or suggestion for consideration or action.

recall Present remembered ideas, facts or experiences.

relate Tell or report about happenings, events or circumstances.

represent Use words, images or symbols to convey meaning.

select Choose in preference to another or others.

sequence Arrange in order.

show Give the steps in a calculation or derivation.

sketch Make a quick, rough drawing of something.

solve Work out the answer to a problem.

state Give a specific name, value or other brief answer.

suggest Put forward an idea for consideration.

summarise Give a brief statement of the main points.

synthesise Combine various elements to make a whole.

Introduction

Across Australia, religious and spiritual beliefs take on many forms. Some are based on writings thousands of years old and are known worldwide. Others are being developed in specific areas now, in the 21st century and are unknown to the author but will have followers in your area when you read this book. Some religions are well known with places of worship and revered leader and famous holy writings. Others are faith journeys of a single person. This book attempts to present some of the ideas to support your learning within the framework of the Queensland Certificate of Education Study of Religion syllabus.

The course includes four units, each with two topics of study. These have been presented in eight discrete chapters, the second four of which are in this book.

The Study of Religion course and therefore this book, focuses on your investigation and study of religious traditions and helps you learn how religion influences people's lives. Regardless of your personal belief, religion has also influenced your life through our laws, ethical understandings and various festivals and holidays. This is because religious beliefs and practices influence the social, cultural and political lives of individual people and whole nations.

The subject matter of religion is both serious and interesting, as it deals with the quest to find meaning within and beyond ordinary life. This quest is common to all of humanity. Due to the different characters and emphases of the religious traditions, there is no single way of presenting them all absolutely equally; yet, every effort has been made to present them all with equal respect and sympathy.

Please note that every person has a biased view of most of these topics. You, the reader, need to be aware of that and determine your own responses to questions of faith and the extension of that faith into human responses, based on all the evidence that you collect. Do not be afraid to critically analyse what you read, hear and see and be prepared to justify your exam responses with valid evidence and supporting information.

Finally, study of religion is current and topical: belief and religion in our society is subject to critical scrutiny and debate, sometimes not as logically critiqued as you have been trained. You should keep up to date through regular scrutiny of the media in various forms – both print and electronic – for all of the different aspects of the course.



Objectives

On completion of this course you should be able to:

- Describe the characteristics of religion and religious traditions.
When describing the characteristics of religion and religious traditions, you should identify and account for the distinguishing features of religion and religious traditions.
- Demonstrate an understanding of religious traditions.
When demonstrating an understanding of religious traditions, you should explain the ways in which religion is expressed in the lives of adherents.
- Distinguish between religious traditions.
When distinguishing between religious traditions, you should determine the distinct characteristics and differences evident within and across religious traditions, and the ways in which individuals interpret and live the tradition.
- Analyse perspectives about religious expressions within traditions.
When analysing perspectives about religious expressions within traditions, you should identify, examine and consider religious characteristics to ascertain a range of views, and provide reasons for such views.
- Consider and organise information about religion.
When considering and organising information about religion, you should interpret information from sources and decide on the validity of these sources.
- Evaluate and draw conclusions about the significance of religion for individuals and its influence on people, society and culture.
When evaluating and drawing conclusions about the significance of religion for individuals and its influence on people, society and culture, you should make judgements about the importance of religion for adherents and the ways religion influences people, society and culture.
- Create responses that communicate meaning to suit purpose.
When creating responses that communicate meaning to suit purpose, you should convey ideas or arguments using your understandings of religion and religious traditions. You should use genre and language conventions, and recognised conventions of referencing.

Chapter 1

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL ETHICS

In this chapter you will build on your understandings of the world religions of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism from earlier in the course to examine the religious-ethical principles that are evident within these traditions. Understanding the religious foundations that form and inform ethical principles within different religious traditions will help you both in this course and in life. You will learn to apply religious ethical principles and theories to real life contexts and evaluate how religions influence people, society and culture and how the believers and adherents relate ethically to real world situations.

For all its consideration in schools, families, religions, political institutions and personal experience, morality and ethics are poorly understood. There is a large gap between understanding the reasoning and philosophy and determining the behaviour that is questioned.

Morality is concerned with what is right or wrong actions rather than the beliefs of a person or group. To the general public morals are generally associated with personal views, for example of alcohol and other drug use, sex, abortion and gambling. Morals also determine a person's response to charity requests and voting and shopping patterns. They reflect the influence of cultural norms and the press, attitudes of family and friends and religion even if the individual claims to be a non-believer.



Figure 1.1 Buddhist charity Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation in Ipswich.

Consider the question: What is good or bad, right or wrong? Then list some activities which you think are always right, sometimes right or wrong and always wrong. If you discuss with your teacher or friends why you have labelled different activities the way you did, it would make an interesting discussion. Try it!

Ethics on the other hand, is the study of the process of individual decision making about what is a morally correct or worthy action. Ethical processes also extend beyond the individual to the responses of a group or society. Ethics is the philosophy or determination of why people make the decisions or judgements they make. In the exercise above, ethics is the label given to *why* you allocated different labels to different 'right' or 'wrong' activities.

A study of ethics supports understanding in making those *why* decisions. In this chapter, you will explore religious and social ethics.

1.1 Religious social ethics

Ethics is the study of the determination process of individual decision making about what is a morally correct or a worthy action.

Religious ethics is based on some religious philosophy or belief and people make and justify their decisions or judgements based on this belief or to follow specific religious commandments or guiding principles.

Ethical determinations or decisions are therefore made in the understanding that they have the authority of God or are supported by the spiritual leaders of the religious tradition. Religious ethical statements take on the status of belief statements and become expected behaviour for followers of particular traditions. Often there are social punishments for non-ethical behaviour or indulging in taboo behaviour. They often extend from the religious community and are used as social rules and determine whole-of-society expectations and so maintain accepted behaviours within the general community.

Personal ethics can be defined as the basic principles and values that govern interactions between individuals and among different individuals in the same community. Often people take as their own ethical guide, the community's collective ethical processes which are often historically developed around the dominant religious belief. Personal ethics are not solely within the individual, they also impact on the experience of others. This can be in personal/family or work experiences. They are usually positive, being expected and rewarded by positive social responses and continued acceptance but a minority are negative and antisocial and are punished by negative social responses or the law.

Social ethics often goes beyond detailed lists of rules and in fact only sometimes supports the creation of specific rules. These 'rules' are usually more general and can be applied to many different situations. They are a guide for societal behaviour and are accepted by many individuals in society and sometimes change slowly over time as society itself changes. They are often considered the acceptable ground rules for a community. The welfare of society as a whole is generally put ahead of the interests of any individual but in that community support, individuals feel safe and know their place. Social rules also help to ensure that everyone is both supported by the rules and kept accountable by the rules.



Figure 1.2 Social justice An example of a social justice event at the University of Southern Queensland.

Types of ethical thought

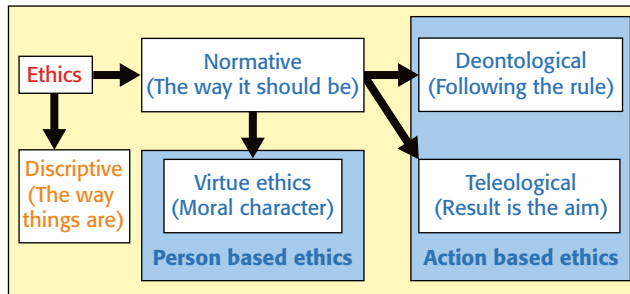


Figure 1.3 Types of ethical thought.

Ethics is usually broken down into two main different ways of thinking: descriptive (the way things are) and normative (the way things should be). Most discussion centres on the difference in behaviour between the two and there is usually only critical analysis of the concept when there is a difference between behaviour and expectation.

Normative ethical systems can be classified into deontological (following the rule is important), teleological or consequentialism (the end justifies the means) and virtue ethics which emphasises a person's moral character. The first two are deontic or action based, because they focus entirely upon the behaviour and actions which a person exhibits. In one the process is the most important whatever the result, and in the other the result is more important in spite of the process.

Virtue ethics focuses upon what sort of person you want to be. Religious belief has an important role to play in each of these categories and because of the range of interpretations, there can be conflict between different responses. One response is described in the quote below.

Goodness does not consist in turning your face towards east or west. The truly good are those who ... give away some of their wealth, however much they cherish it, to their relatives, to orphans, the needy, travellers and beggars and to liberate those in debt and bondage; those who keep up the prayers and pay the prescribed alms; who keep pledges whenever they make them; who are steadfast in misfortune, adversity and times of danger. These are the ones who are true, and it is they who are aware of God.

Qur'an 2:178

Descriptive ethics is based on observation of attitudes of individuals and communities. From such observations, one can reveal people's beliefs about values; which behaviours are right or wrong, and which characteristics are virtuous or evil. Research also investigates human responses to reward or punishment according to the law, politics or society. As our society changes over time and new discoveries/inventions change behaviours, descriptive ethics will try to understand what ethical processes remain and what change.

Ethical theories are the basis for making moral decisions. Some examples of ethical theories include: utilitarianism, hedonism, ethical egoism and situational ethics.

Utilitarianism

This idea or theory is based on the belief that good means the greatest good for the greatest number of people. If something benefits a lot of people then it must be good.

This system was developed by two 18th century British thinkers, Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. They were both social activists dedicated to improving prisons and the law in Britain. The utilitarian slogan is 'the greatest good to the greatest number of people'. The concept of least harm to the fewest number of people is the obvious situation when there are no 'good' results from a decision.

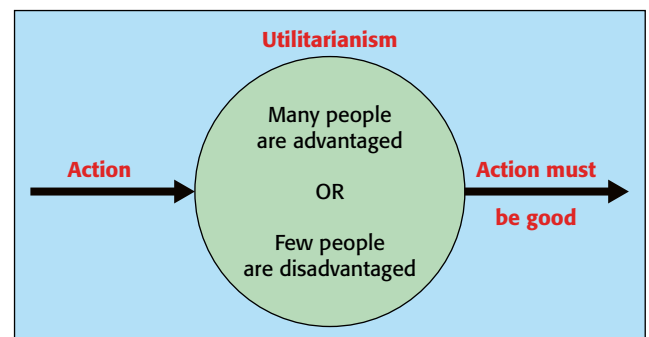


Figure 1.4 Utilitarianism.

Hedonism

Hedonism is the belief that pleasure is the main aim of human life and whatever is right is pleasant; whatever is pleasant or feels good must be right. Pleasure can include of the mind such as comfortable thoughts and of the flesh such as sexual or sensual indulgence.

Hedonism was developed by Epicurus, a Greek thinker born in 342 BCE. He believed that everybody strives after the pleasure of happiness and therefore this is the main justification of human life. He wrote the following.

Pleasure is the beginning and end of living happily.
Epicurus

Epicurus did not just mean physical pleasure but pleasures of the mind and soul as well. He also believed that true pleasure and happiness lay in freeing of the body of pain and freeing the soul from confusion or difficult decision making. A hedonist believes that whatever feels good must be right.

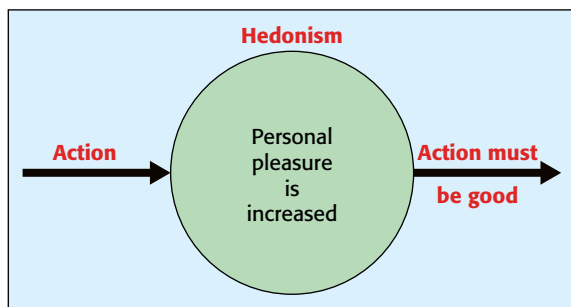


Figure 1.5 Hedonism.

Ethical egoism

Ethical egoism is based on the idea that a person's one and only duty is to get the best, the most good, for himself or herself. This concept is supported by evolution which describes the survival of the fittest and therefore anything which leads to long term survival must be part of the grand plan of life.

The ethical considerations arise if the decisions have the possibility of harming someone else but according to ethical egoism even though what is good for one, might harm another, what is good for me is best!

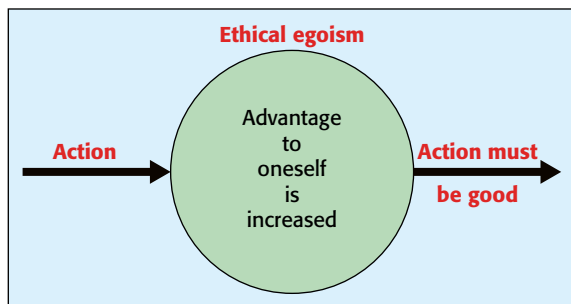


Figure 1.6 Ethical egoism.

Situation ethics

Situation ethics is based on the concept that there is no one right or wrong way to make decisions because there are no true rules, there is just one guiding idea of love or compassion. With compassion there is also the side effect of creating personal satisfaction or happiness, as portrayed in Buddhist philosophy.

'If you want others to be happy, practise compassion. If you want to be happy, practise compassion.'

Dalai Lama

Some religions support this concept of making decisions because they believe that God has given us the intellect to consider actions and therefore each decision must look at all the possible alternatives. For example, many Christians believe that divorce is immoral but a Christian using situation ethics might say that a divorce will do less harm to all concerned than not having a divorce. They would summarise as: if, in a given situation, the decision reflects a loving, caring attitude, then it is right.

In 1966 an American professor called Joseph Fletcher wrote on situation ethics. He believed that when we are faced with a decision about what is the right thing to do then we should not apply any rules of religion or society but act on the basis of love. There is no absolutely right or wrong way to decide what to do; rather we have to work each particular situation out and then respond in a loving way.

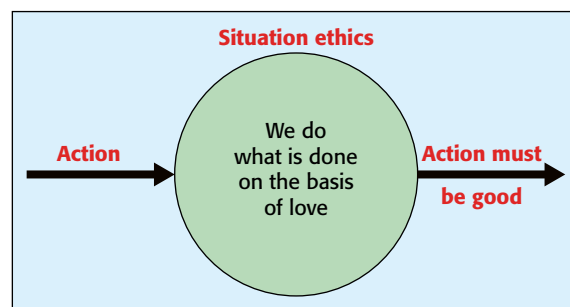


Figure 1.7 Situation ethics.

Depending on the actual behaviour or the strength of support for various behaviours, in some societies, there are social punishments for non-ethical behaviour and in some countries, there are criminal laws set up to mirror religious ethical behaviour. In modern Australia, the fundamental rules against killing and stealing are based on the Judeo-Christian rules set down in the Torah thousands of years ago.

Laws can be and are often changed. As an example, the postal survey in 2017 on same sex marriage, included many arguments from religious people supporting both the yes and no responses. Subsequent to the majority 'yes' response in that survey, the law was changed.

1.2 Ethical teachings in sacred texts

Ethical teachings in Buddhism

Buddha taught his disciples that the way to overcome desire was to follow an eight step set of procedures. This Eightfold Path is the basis of Buddhist teaching and aims to develop self-understanding and control. The steps are listed below and grouped into a number of sections.

While each of these can be presented as one or two words, they should be prefaced by the following words.

A desire to reach right ...

This is because the journey or pathway in Buddhism is of great importance and for most Buddhists, more important than the end point.

The first two steps relate to wanting to reach enlightenment and a commitment to the path. They also involve accepting that evil is anger, delusion, greed and hatred and that these attitudes need to be overcome. These steps are a way of obtaining wisdom by having a right **view** and a right **intention**.

Steps 3, 4 and 5 relate to the ethical teachings and the moral decisions Buddhists will want to make in their speech, action and how they run their lives as a result of their commitment. Speaking truth rather than lies, being positive rather than using 'put downs' and expressing loving behaviour rather than negative hating or destructive behaviour are part of these steps. The concept of livelihood also recognises that we can make these decisions in everyday life by the simple acts of living. Ethical conduct is summarised as right **speech**, right **action** and right **livelihood**.

The final three steps take the individual beyond the physical and into the mental control of themselves. Effort is maintaining the process when the going gets tough. Mindfulness is understanding what is happening and having the ability to realise how actions and thoughts have a bearing on life.

Concentration is the ability to block out distractions and temptations, much like how Buddha blocked out the temptations of Mara. Mental development passes through the steps of right **effort**, right **mindfulness** and right **concentration**.



Figure 1.8 Feeding the monks Gaining merit by showing 'right action' feeding monks early in the morning in Luang Prabang, Laos.

The Five Precepts or basic moral values for human beings are part of the belief structure and basic ethics of Buddhism. They follow directly from the Eightfold Path as the way to enlightenment. They are not instructions but a set of guidelines to direct learning and behaviour. The precepts are prefaced by the words: 'To undertake the training in ...'. This presumes that a Buddhist will want to improve their own ability to follow the precept and develop knowledge, understanding and skills to respond to the concept expressed in the precept. Originally the precepts were statements of advice given by Buddha in response to followers who had caused some unhappiness or suffering to themselves and others by their actions.

The Five Precepts are a subset of the more specific rules for bhiku (monks) who have 250 rules and bhikuni (nuns) with 350 rules. These rules which define living in the monastery community (sangha) do have punishments and were designed by the sangha for the maintenance of its own order and focus.

In the Mahayana variant of Buddhism, especially, there is another list of Virtuous Deeds, or acts which lead to nirvana. These are listed in the table below to show how they compare with the Five Precepts and Eightfold Path.



Figure 1.9 Feeding the nuns Gaining merit by showing 'right action' feeding nuns before noon in Sagaing, Myanmar.

Table 1.1 Comparison of the Five Precepts, Noble Eightfold Path and Ten Virtuous Deeds.

Five Precepts To Undertake the training to refrain from:	Noble Eightfold Path Right:	Ten Virtuous Deeds No:	Approach
Destroying living creatures.	Actions	Killing	Bodily action
Taking that which is not given.	Livelihood	Stealing	
Sensual misconduct.		Sensual misconduct	
Incorrect speech.	Speech	Lying	Speech
		Harsh speech	
		Tale bearing	
		Idle talk	
Intoxicating drinks and drugs which lead to carelessness.	Effort	Ignorance	Mind
	Mindfulness	Greed	
	Meditation	Hatred	
	Thoughts		
	Understanding		

When someone does not follow the precept then people suffer the results of that errant action. This is not punishment but a direct consequence of the actions.

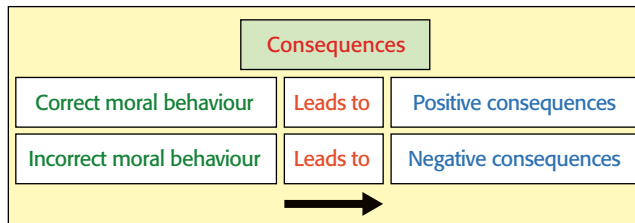


Figure 1.10 Consequences of behaviour.

Buddhists accept and understand that every action creates consequences. Some consequences are planned such as paying attention in class leads to a student understanding material and a better exam mark. Some consequences are not planned in advance such as the car accident which resulted from the actions of drinking and driving.

The uncomfortable or bad consequences must have resulted from inappropriate behaviour. There is no specific religious punishment, apart from the actual consequences, for not fulfilling the precept but the journey to nirvana will, of course, take longer.

Ethical teachings in Christianity

Christian morality is based on the will of God. Christians believe that God's will is known and exemplified through Jesus' life and teachings. Humanity finds out about these teachings and can observe the example of Jesus' life because it is recorded in the New Testament. The writings of the New Testament describe the teachings and life example of Jesus. His basic teaching was for people to love each other and the text also presents examples of how to personally relate to the love statements of Jesus. This is done by giving practical responses of forgiveness and examples of behaviour. In the Gospel of Matthew, the Beatitudes (blessings) section is an important collection of Jesus' sayings in the form of a sermon.



Figure 1.11 Church teachings Church statues and decorations present the teachings of the church to members of the congregation. This example is Church of Santa María de Loreto, Achao, Chile.

The teachings in support of peace makers and those who are merciful are used to determine and support Christian ethics. The statements express Jesus' teaching as one of inclusivity, love and God's grace compared with earlier teachings of rule based behaviour. The teachings are also explained and analysed through the historical teachings of the church and within each individual congregation. God's will is also believed to be directly experienced by individuals through the Holy Spirit.

Christian ethics can be divided into two very different approaches. These are based on the concepts of authority or natural law.

Authority

Christian ethics take as sources of authority all of: scriptures as from the Bible, tradition or authority of church leaders, human experience using the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and logic or reason using God's gift of intelligence.

The issue for a Christian who attempts to follow Christian morality is exactly how the four sources of authority should be used and how they are balanced or weighted when a decision needs to be made. For example, during the Reformation, Protestants moved away from accepting church authority and moved towards the direct interpretation of the Scriptures. Countering this, it is understood that Scriptures are directly the word of God but are themselves interpreted through the writers and translators and the interpretation of the church through history. Partly this is necessary because of understanding texts in context and partly because Christianity is accepted as a living religion where the word of God is revealed through the Holy Spirit to individuals today.

Jesus' teachings

At the centre of Christian ethics is the idea of a love for all people. Christian love is called *agape*. It is an empathetic attitude of caring for everyone and anyone by understanding the needs of others. This is regardless of who they are or what they are like. The New Testament was originally written in everyday or common Greek and in this language, there are a number of different words used for love.



Figure 1.12 Holy Spirit Representation of the Holy Spirit in the sanctuary of Punte del Este Parish Church, Uruguay.

Table 1.2 Comparing the traditional Greek words for love.

Greek word	Simple meaning	Description
<i>Eros</i>	Sexual love	The word 'erotic' derives from <i>eros</i> . Although this word is not used in the New Testament, this is the concept that many young people first think about when considering the concept of love.
<i>Storge</i>	Family affection	The love that members of a family will have for each other, parental love for children, love for parents and siblings.
<i>Philia</i>	Brotherly love	The concept of love that helps people support and look out for each other. In the Australian context it is closest to mateship. Jesus loved his disciples in this manner.
<i>Agape</i>	Empathetic love	This was the most noble of the concepts of love. It embodies love for enemies as well as friends. Agape describes the love of God for humanity and is the love that Jesus taught to his disciples.

Agape is not sexual or romantic love nor even the same love as for a brother or sister or a child. It is the kind of love shown in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’

‘What is written in the Law?’ Jesus replied.

He answered, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

‘You have answered correctly,’ Jesus replied. ‘Do this and you will live.’

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’

In reply Jesus said: ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

‘Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’

The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’

Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’

Luke 10:25-37

The quote below from the New Testament gives the basic and often repeated instructions from Jesus to his followers to love one another. Jesus also supports the Old Testament commandment of loving God as God loves humanity.

You have heard that it was said, love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Matthew 5:43-44



Figure 1.13 Helping others Christian aid agencies include UnitingCare Queensland.

Christian ethics are based on Jesus’ teaching of love. Jesus’ teachings were different from the general ethical behaviour of his time. The Jewish ethical beliefs are based on the Torah and the laws of Moses as described in the Bible (Old Testament). Jesus, in contrast wanted people to change their attitude and concept of behaviour rather than responding to a rule. Examples shown in the Gospels are where Jesus condemned not only murder but the anger that may have precipitated it. This shows that he considered thoughts mattered just as much as the conduct that resulted from these thoughts.

For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man ‘unclean’.

Matthew 15:19

But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgement.

Matthew 5:22

The early apostles took Jesus' message and spread it around the early Church. One of the most eloquent of these apostles was Paul. In his letter to the people in the church at Rome he summarised all the commandments of the Old Testament into one rule.

Love your neighbour as yourself. Love does no harm to its neighbour. Therefore, love is the fulfilment of the law.

Romans 13:9-10

Natural law

Natural law is a term used to describe the ethical thought developed from the concept of perfect creation. The belief is that God created everything perfectly and if we study nature we will learn how to behave. Particularly within Christianity, the Catholic Church makes great use of the natural law philosophy. It was developed and stated by the Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas. The Catholic Church teaches that humans are made up of both mind (non-physical) and body (physical) and that the two are linked. Specifically, natural law is most often used by the Catholic Church in the area of sexual ethics because some aspects of humanity such as reproduction, are common to all life.

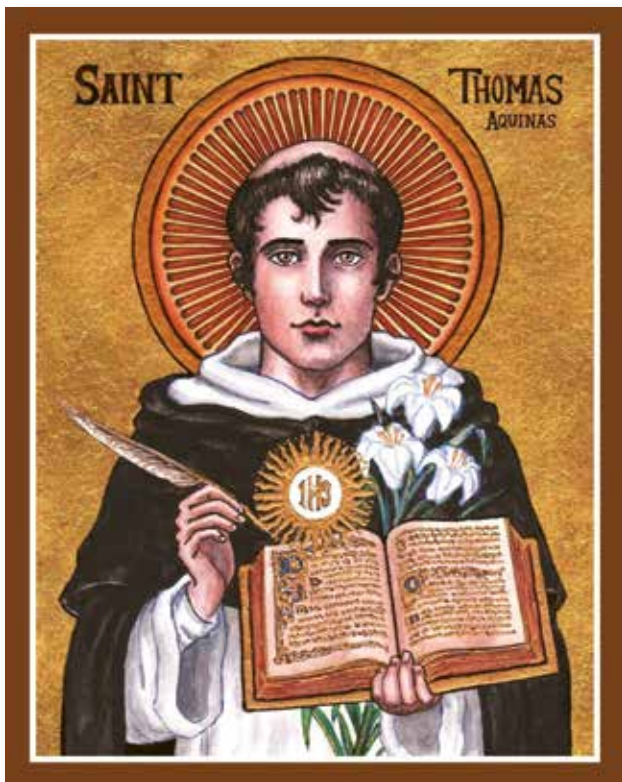


Figure 1.14 Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).

Aquinas wrote that human nature was defined by both reason and freedom of choice. Reason allows humanity to determine the will of God and the freedom of choice allows individuals to follow God's will or not. The expectation and hope of the church is that humanity equates freedom with the responsibility to act as we were made by God therefore humanity needs to follow the natural law of God.

One of the first principles of natural law is to do good and not evil. The question that follows from this is: What is good and what is evil and how do we know what behaviour is which? Aquinas argued that self-evident first principles, such as 'harm no one' and the Ten Commandments are useful general guiding statements. For Aquinas, what is 'really good' is fulfilling the potential of our common human nature. If something makes us more fully human, it is good and morally right, if it makes us less human then it is bad and morally wrong.

Aquinas also defined what it is to be human. The general purpose of being human is to live, work, reproduce, educate children, have an ordered society and worship God and so actions that support these purposes are good but action that deny them is bad.

According to Aquinas, reproduction is one of the primary purposes of humanity. He considered reproduction as the natural purpose of the sex organs or genitalia. If one decides that reproduction is their primary purpose, then any use of the sex organs for any other purpose is not human but 'intrinsically evil' and morally wrong.

Acts such as masturbation, use of contraception, homosexuality, sex with animals, do not use sex organs for reproduction and are therefore all morally wrong. This statement is the foundation of the Catholic Church's teaching on sexual ethics.



Figure 1.15 LGBT Catholic banner showing not all Catholics support the natural law ethics of Aquinas.

Ethical teachings in Hinduism

Hindus use a combination of three main approaches for determining ethical and moral conduct for specific situations. They are listed in the following table.

Table 1.3 Hindu approaches for determining ethical conduct.

Hindu term	Description
Atman	Atman is the conscious connection with everything and so behaviour can be related to: 'what I do to you, I do to me'.
Karma	Law of karma with its equivalent responses of good, bad or neutral karma experienced in this life or future lives. Karma yoga is the path of ethical actions and is the process of behaviour which aims to reach supreme consciousness (moksha) through action.
Ahimsa	Defined as: 'do no harm', ahimsa or non-violence is the basic statement of ethical behaviour.

The basis of Hindu ethics is the all-pervading Atman or soul. It can be defined as common (that is in everyone), pure consciousness. Following from this belief that the soul is in all things means that if you injure your neighbour, you really injure yourself. If you help a person in distress, you help yourself and so on. Whatever you do to your fellow creatures you do to yourself because the whole world is the one soul.



Figure 1.16 Ganesh Mask of Ganesh, an important deity in Hinduism.

There are a number of statements which are used to explain this but they all say the same thing. The Atman or self is one and life is common in all life. It is not important whether we are dealing with humans, animals or even plants. This belief is considered to be the primary truth of Hinduism and is therefore the foundation of Hindu morality.

Hinduism recognises many religious paths (perhaps as many as there are people) but there are three main paths.

Hindu religious paths to moksha:

1. The path of knowledge (jnana).
2. The path of devotion (bhakti).
3. The path of work and religious performances (karma).

Within the karmic path there is only good, neutral or bad karmic actions or behaviours. Understanding and following the teachings (dharma) will lead to good karma.

Karmic path of ethical decision making:

1. Conduct or behaviour is the result of human will.
2. The effect of following the dharma is good conduct.
3. Good conduct results in good karma.

Karma is the concept found in the Eastern religions of Buddhism and Hinduism which explains the whole idea of cause and effect. In summary, it is all that an individual has done during their life or many past lives and is still doing in their current life. The effects of these deeds create the present and future experiences for the individual. It focuses responsibility on the individual for their future success and failure.

Answers

Chapter 1 Religious and Social Ethics

- Which statement is the best definition of the term: deontological?
Answer (C): Fulfilling one's obligation or duty.
- Ethical egoism is a type of ethical thought which wants to advantage:
Answer (B): Myself regardless of the cost to everyone else.
- In Buddhism, the Noble Eightfold Path describes three aspects of physical behavioural morality. They are:
Answer (D): Right speech, action and livelihood.
- Shariah law is a set of requirements or laws based on:
Answer (C): Qur'an.
- The quote below from the New Testament gives the basic and often repeated instructions from Jesus to his followers to love one another. The Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Greek. Both times the word 'love' is used in this verse it was originally the same Greek word. That Greek word was:
Answer (A): Agape.
- Define and describe 'natural law'.
Natural law is a term used to describe the ethical thought developed from the concept of perfect creation. The belief is that God created everything perfectly and if we study nature we will learn how to behave. Particularly within Christianity, the Catholic Church makes great use of the natural law philosophy. It was developed and stated by the Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas. The Catholic Church teaches that humans are made up of both mind (non-physical) and body (physical) and that the two are linked.
- Recall the three types of karma and explain how a follower of Hinduism can reduce the amount of negative karma and increase the amount of positive karma.
The three types of karma are sanchita karma, the total of past karmas that are not yet resolved, prarabdha karma or the resolution of sanchita (past) karma still to be experienced in this life and kriyamana karma, which is karma that is still being created by thought, word and deed and will be resolved in the future.
Hindus accept and understand that every action creates consequences. Wrong behaviour is understood to lead to uncomfortable or bad consequences. There is no specific religious punishment apart from the actual karmic consequences. Because Hindus believe that the soul goes through a cycle of successive lives (reincarnation), the state of being of the next incarnation is always determined by the level of karma obtained in the previous life. Within the concept of karma there are only good, neutral or bad karmic actions or behaviours. Good karmic actions include peaceful actions. This is consistent with the concept of ahimsa or non-violence being the underlying ethical concept of Hinduism. One can reduce the amount of negative karma and increase the amount of positive karma in three ways. The first way is by doing no harm and the second way is by following the teachings of the ages as found in the religious texts – such as the Vedas. The third way is to live one's life according to the path of knowledge (jnana) or the path of devotion (bhakti) or the path of work and religious performances (karma) or any other path which increases others' wellbeing and reduces pain and suffering in others.
- Outline the core ethical teachings of Islam and explain some of the ethical teachings of Shariah law.
The core ethical teachings of Islam are five important virtues which draw on essential moral characteristics expected of Muslims. These are: the love of Allah, humility, modesty, naturalness and the plan of Allah, environmental concern. Human beings are the pinnacle of God's creation and are God's vice-regents on Earth. Humans are given reason and choice and as a result have responsibilities. Such responsibilities include oversight or stewardship of other animals, the general environment and one's own health or wellbeing. Ethics emphasises the connection between the body and the spirit. The Qur'an and the teaching of the prophet gave specific and detailed guidelines regarding various ethical questions.
The principal ethical teachings in Islam are based on love of Allah coupled with an awareness or consciousness called taqwa related to submission to Allah. Muslims strive to find the best way to live and respond to the will of Allah by using the Qur'an, hadith and sunnah as sources for ethical guidance and this leads to a sense of kinship or Ummah.
The basic principle of Shariah is to see the will of Allah carried out on Earth the same as in heaven. Muslims believe they can learn of and know God's will by studying the revealed scriptures, the Qur'an. Because the basic purpose of the will of God is to create compassion, tolerance and kindness by supporting generosity and justice, it is against any behaviour which is considered cruel, selfish or exploitative. The Shariah rules support this purpose. Islamic belief is that Allah gave humanity a concept of right and wrong, of conscience and the ability to discern morality. Therefore, the knowledge of good compared to evil or the ability to distinguish right and permissible (halal) from wrong or forbidden (haram) is a part of the basic common sense of humanity. Associated moral ideas include a sense of justice, truthfulness in speech and action called honesty and a sense of empathy resulting in support of the weak. It is these basic understandings of truth that will be assessed at the Day of Judgement and Muslims believe that regardless of the religious belief of the individual, the morality of one's life when measured against these criteria will determine entry to paradise.